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## OHSU SPINE CENTER

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## RADIOFREQUENCY FACET DENERVATION

### OVERVIEW

Radiofrequency facet denervation (RFD) is a minimally-invasive surgical procedure used to treat central neck or back pain caused by arthritis or injury to the facet joints. This procedure is also called **lumbar radiofrequency neurotomy** or radiofrequency rhizotomy.

The facet joints are small joints at the back of your spine that help keep the spine straight. These joints can be damaged by:

- Normal activity
- Aging
- Inflammatory diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis
- Injury or accident

The damaged facet joints can cause pain by pressing on nearby nerves. If pain caused by the damaged joints does not improve with physical therapy, medications, or both, doctors might suggest RFD. Your doctor tests the nerves to determine which ones are causing pain, then treats the nerves to stop them from sending pain messages.

### THE DIAGNOSTIC PROCEDURE

To test the nerves, your doctor uses an X-ray to guide a needle to the nerve connected to the damaged joint. Once the needle is in place, the doctor injects some local anesthetic to numb the nerve. You might have more than one injection, depending on how many joints are damaged.

After the injections, you compare your pain levels before and after the procedure. The numbing effect from the injections is temporary. You might need injections on separate days to make an accurate diagnosis.

If your pain gets better after the injections, your doctor might suggest radiofrequency facet denervation to relieve your pain.

### THE RFD PROCEDURE

Radiofrequency facet denervation is performed on an outpatient basis, with no overnight hospital stay. Prior to the procedure, you will need to follow eating and drinking restrictions as outlined by your doctor. You will also need to arrange for someone to take you home afterwards.

Your doctor will begin the procedure by giving you sedative medication to make you relax and minimize discomfort. If you need to, you can talk to your doctor during the procedure.

Using an x-ray for guidance, the doctor places a special needle in the nerve connected to the damaged facet joint. After injecting local anesthetic to numb the nerve, the doctor heats the needle to damage a portion of the nerve. This stops that nerve from sending pain signals. It does not damage nerves that go to your arms or legs, and does not damage the joint any further.

You might still have some pain for up to two weeks after RFD, and your doctor may give you medication to relieve this pain. After two weeks,

### SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT

503 418-9888

### LOCATIONS

**Center for Health & Healing**  
3303 SW Bond Ave, 8th floor  
Portland, OR 97239

**OHSU Spine Center in Beaverton**  
1500 NW Bethany Blvd., Suite 195  
Beaverton, OR 97006

### SELF-REFERRAL TOOL

Use our Self-Referral Tool to help you determine which OHSU spine specialist to refer yourself to.

[Self-Referral Tool](#) →

### VIDEO RESOURCES

Watch an animated video to learn more about this procedure.

[Lumbar Radiofrequency Neurotomy](#) →

[Cervical Facet Radiofrequency Neurotomy](#) →

### ASK THE SPINE EXPERTS

Read frequently asked questions about spine treatments at OHSU or ask your own question.

[Frequently Asked](#)

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you may start a [physical therapy](#) program to help reduce pain and improve function.

Watch our [radiofrequency facet denervation animated video](#) to learn more about this procedure.

### CONTACT US

If you think RFD might be right for you, use our [Self-Referral Tool](#) to determine which OHSU Spine Center specialist you should see to discuss your condition. [Contact us](#) to schedule an appointment at 503 418-9888.

Questions

[Ask the Spine Experts a Question](#) →

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